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ROBERT ALLERTON: March 20, 1873 - December 22, 1964

by W.W.G. Moir[1/]

In the passing of Robert Allerton lovers of art and the plant world lost a great benefactor. This love for art and the earth resulted in his giving millions of dollars to the world in the furtherance of their appreciation and use. Had it not been for his great generosity of a gift of $75,000 to the Hawaiian Botanical Gardens Foundation this group would not have been able to carry on its campaign for the passage of Public Law 88-449, which granted a national charter to the Pacific Tropical Botanical Garden on August 19, 1964. His greater gift of a million dollars in securities to the Pacific Tropical Botanical Garden shortly after the charter was granted is even a greater indication of his love for gardens and the plant world.

The late Mr. Robert Allerton was born on March 20, 1873 on Prairie Avenue, then a distinguished Chicago boulevard. His father was Samuel Waters Allerton, a pioneer Chicago cattle king and banker. His mother was Padelle Thompson Allerton. Robert's father was born in Amenia, New York and as a young man, travelling on foot and by canal boat, went "west" to raise cattle. Highly successful, he helped to establish banks, stockyards and street railways in Chicago. His mother died when Robert was young and his father married his wife's sister, Agnes Thompson of Peoria, Illinois.

He attended the Royal Academy in Munich, Germany for four years and the Julien Academy in Paris for two years. He did extensive travelling in Europe to the wonderful gardens and art museums. When he realized he was not cut out to be an artist, he returned to the United States and took over the fulltime management of his father's farm in Central Illinois. He had been given several thousand acres of land in this area when he was born. He then spent a winter in Europe looking at houses with the architect John Borie. In 1899 to 1900 the large home resembling an English country estate was built on the banks of the Sangamon River. It contained approximately 30 rooms. Surrounding the home were approximately 1500 acres of forest and park. The garden was developed into a show place of formal and rustic gardening and the house was filled with art treasures from all over the world. Murals by famous artists decorated the rooms, while sculptures by Roden, Bourdelle, and Mills were given their own setting in the garden. John Wyatt Gregg, his adopted son, had much to to with the landscaping of the garden.

Robert met his future son at a house warming of a University of Illinois fraternity house in 1921. A warm relationship grew and finally in 1959 resulted in the legal adoption of John Gregg. Robert had to have the laws of Illinois changed to permit the

1/ President of the Hawaiian Botanical Garden Foundation

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adoption and it went through when Robert was 87 and John 59. This father and son relationship has been a most wonderful and stimulating life for both during the forty three years until Robert's death.

Robert established the Agnes Allerton textile wing in the Chicago Art Institute in honor of his stepmother. He had been the greatest living benefactor to the Chicago Art institute. His last large gift was a $500,000 trust fund in 1963.

His generosity to the Honolulu Academy of Arts is well known. He was on the Board of Trustees since 1946. He gave nearly 200 individual works of art to the Academy. It is estimated by the officials of the Academy that these can be conservatively estimated at $500,000. In addition he gave cash gifts of more than $125,000. The library of the Academy was also his favorite recipient and he contributed $50,000 for the addition in 1961. In 1951 he established the Robert Allerton Fund for acquisitions with an initial gift of $50,000 and has added to it in later years.

He was interested in ballet and made great contributions to its development in America for more than 60 years. He did much for Foster Gardens both in the purchase of land on the Nuuanu River side and in donations for the purchasing of plants.

His estate near Monticello was given to the University of Illinois in 1946 along with some 4000 acres of farm land to support it. The University of Illinois maintains an art school there and the carriage house in back has been converted into a dining hall for 150 persons. The estate was given "for education and research, as a forest, a wild- and plant-life reserve, as an example of a landscape garden and as a public park".

Robert visited Hawaii some 70 years ago for the first time on his way to Japan. He was a frequent visitor to the islands thereafter and was here when Louise Gaylord came to Hawaii to settle as the bride of Walter F. Dillingham. He and Louise had been childhood friends.

In 1938 Robert and John, as they were so known to friends, purchased the Lawai-Kai property on Kauai from the Alexander McBryde Estate. This area had originally belonged to Queen Emma. Robert's residence has always been in Illinois and also his financial interests. Hawaii has been a garden paradise to retreat to and to enjoy his treasures with his son John.

At the start of the transformation of an old Hawaiian style property into a jungle paradise, I had the pleasure of walking through all the property and enjoying the enthusiasm of Robert and John while they gave me a narration of their plans for the transformation. It had been most delightful to watch it progress and end in a jungle paradise. In 1958 this garden was featured in Life magazine in color photography and article. In 1959 the Garden Club of America gave him a medal for outstanding achievement in garden design. Only a few months ago I visited Robert after the passage of the charter bill to thank him for his great generosity in giving the corporation its financial start of one million dollars and also for his farsightedness in giving the foundation $75,000 to get its campaign "off the ground". Talking to Robert and hearing his ideas of how we should proceed was a great stimulation. It was also of great interest to hear him tell of his many helicopter rides over the island of Kauai and even landing on Mount Waialeale. There was a mind as keen and full of interest as a man seventy years younger. His mind was most active even though his eyes and ears had started to fail him. I have yet to find a man and what he stands for quite his equal. It has been most wonderful and enriching to have known him for some 25 years. To have him as a Trustee of the Pacific Tropical Botanical Garden and one of the incorporators had been a grand event before his death.

This great benefactor of art, ballet, and gardening will be remembered in many more places than Hawaii for his quiet, gentle, and kindly attributes as well as for his great generosity to mankind over the past 70 years. His son John will continue in his footsteps and we know that the garden and the interests in the Academy of Arts will not end. John is President of the Honolulu Academy of Arts. He has widened the paths through the Lawai Kai gardens so that a golf cart can be used. This he did so that Robert might continue to get around, but it will also speed up the daily supervision of this 125 acre garden.

As the President of the Hawaiian Botanical Garden Foundation, Incorporated, and Trustee of the Pacific Tropical Botanical Garden it has been a highlight in my life to pay tribute to one of the world's great - Robert Allerton.

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F E B R U A R Y M E E T I N G

Monday, February 1, 1965. 7:30 P.M. Agee Hall, H.S.P.A. Experiment Station Keeaumoku Street. The speaker will be Dr. Sterling Wortman, Director, Pineapple Research Institute. Dr. Wortman's presentation will be based on his work and experience at the International Rice Research Institute in the Philippines.
Topic: "Plant habit in rice: its effect on productivity and adaptation of varieties."

N O T E S A N D N E W S

BISHOP MUSEUM: Professor Harold St. John, long chairman of the Botany Department, has returned from six years of travel overseas. He taught at Chatham College Universite de Saigon, Universite de Hue, and Cairo University. He made exploring trips for Pandanus in Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand, Malaya, islands of the Indian Ocean, Madagascar, and in Kenya, Tanganyika, Uganda, Mocambique, Rhodesia, and South Africa. In Europe he did research in most of the large herbaria. He is now resuming botanical research at the Bishop Museum. He was recently elected a foreign fellow of the Linnean Society of London.

PINEAPPLE RESEARCH INSTITUTE: Beatrice H. Krauss, physiologist at the Pineapple Research Institute, has just returned from a 7 months trip around the world. Three months were spent in Bogor, Indonesia, doing research in the Treub Laboratory. She worked half-time on the morphology of inflorescences of Bromeliaceae; the remainder time was spent in helping four young staff members of the Laboratory with their research in anatomy and microbiology. This was under an arrangement set up between the University of Hawaii and the National Biological Institute of Indonesia, part of MIPI (see HBS Newsletter 2(5):66, 67, 1963). She reports that many profitable and pleasant hours were spent in the tropical gardens in Bogor and Tjibodas (a mountain garden branch). She gave several lectures at colleges and universities in Java on pineapple growing and research.

After her stay in Bogor, she visited universities and research institutions in Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Colombo, Kandy, Cairo, Athens, Rome, and London on her way back to the United States.

P A C I F I C S C I E N C E[3/]

11th Pacific Science Congress: Plans are already underway for the 11th Pacific Science Congress, which will meet in Tokyo, Japan, from August 22 to September 10, 1966. The first meeting of the General Affairs Committee of the Organizing Committee was held in August. Reports made included budget estimates, other international meetings scheduled during 1966, plans for international meetings concurrent with the congress, conference halls and offices, and field trips and meetings during the Congress' third week. Invitations to member countries will be sent before February 1965.

Solomon Islands Expedition: E.J.H. Corner, Cambridge University botanist, will lead a six month Royal Society of London Expedition to the Solomons in mid-1965. Eight botanists and zoologists will study the effects of variations of altitude on the growth and distribution of species in the densely forested areas on the larger islands.

Indonesia: Dr. Soetomo Soerohaldoko has been appointed Head of the Botanical Research Institute(Treub Laboratory) of the Department of National Research, Bogor, Indonesia. He will also serve as Director of the Research Institute for Plant Physiology, Department of Agriculture.

10th PSC Bibliography: A bibliography of papers presented at the 10th Pacific Science Congress and subsequently published is being compiled by the secretariats of the Pacific Science Association (Bishop Museum) and the 10th PSC. Drafts of papers published in botany and forestry are found on pages 11-17 and 17-19 respectively.

ATTENTION

Hundreds of thousands of far-traveling ocean birds of many kinds are being captured, marked, and released on mid-Pacific islands in a widespread study of seabird migration by the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. Although it is known that some kinds of birds perform remarkable annual migrations of 10,000 miles or more over the North and South Pacific Oceans, the regular travels of most species are unknown or poorly Understood.

To learn more about the migrations of seabirds, Smithsonian ornithologists have captured and marked over 300,000 birds of 28 different kinds in the Central Pacific with standard, numbered, United States Fish and Wildlife Service aluminum legbands. Of these, over 60,000 have been marked with 4 inch colored plastic leg-streamers.

Anyone coming into the possession of a banded dead bird in the Pacific Ocean Area is asked to cooperate by returning the band, together with time and place of recovery, as instructed on the band. For live birds, only the band number together with time and place of capture need be sent to the directed address, after which the bird should be liberated so that its further travel may be traced.

Anyone sighting a bird with a colored leg-streamer anywhere in the Pacific Ocean Area is asked to cooperate by recording the name or description of the kind of bird wearing the streamer, the color of the streamer, the date seen, and the latitude and longitude or approximate location of sighting. All information on birds with colored leg-streamers should be sent as soon as possible to: Division of Birds
Smithsonian Institution
Washington, D. C. 20560

EACH COOPERATOR WILL BE ADVISED WHERE THE BANDED OR COLOR-MARKED BIRD WAS TAGGED.

3/ Abstracted from the Pacific Science Association Information Bulletin 16(5):1-19, Oct. 1964, by A. K. Chock.

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THE HAWAIIAN BOTANICAL SOCIETY was founded in 1924 to "advance the science of Botany in all its applications, encourage research in Botany in all its phases," and "promote the welfare of its members and to develop the spirit of good fellowship and cooperation among them." "Any person interested in the plant life of the Hawaiian Islands is eligible for membership in this Society."

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The Hawaiian Botanical Society Newsletter is published in February, April, June, October, and December. It is distributed to all Society members and other interested individuals and institutions with the purpose of informing them about botanical news and progress in Hawaii and the Pacific. News contributions and articles are welcomed. The deadline submission of news items is the 20th of each month prior to publication.
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Membership dues are $3.00 per calendar year and include receipt of the Newsletter.

ALOHA from your Botanical Society President and staff! The year 1965 starts the Botanical Society into its fifth decade! Forty years ago, this Society was initiated; in next month's Newsletter, we will sketch out something of the history of our Society. Help us out with any notes of interest you'd like to include in this historical sketch! And, while you're at it, let us know of any associates and friends of yours who should be invited into our membership.

James L. Brewbaker

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